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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0209
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0252
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1795
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 2646
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4529
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUCNFB/FBI WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KARACHI 000042

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: BALOCHISTAN - SHI'A HAZARA PARTY LEADER SLAIN

REF: KARACHI 26

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CONSUL GENERAL STEPHEN FAKAN, REASONS 1.4
(b) AND (d).

Summary:

1. (SBU) Sunni extremists purportedly from the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi terrorist organization claimed credit for killing the Chair of the Hazara Democratic Party in Quetta on January 26. This marks the third prominent assassination of members of the minority Shi'a community in January, the latest in what Hazara community leaders claim is an upsurge in sectarian violence in the city. Baloch nationalists and Hazara leaders have accused security forces and the GOP of providing lax protection and even abetting the killers. Police officials deny this and point out that they have also been targeted and that sectarian violence has increased since the escape of two Lashkar-e-Jhangvi leaders from jail in 2008.

Shi'a Political Party Leader Killed

2. (C) On January 26, motorcycle borne gunmen assassinated Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) Chair Ghulam Hussain outside of his travel agency on Dr. Bano Road in Quetta. The attack comes after a January 14 killing of four Hazara police officers and the wounding of three others in Quetta (reftel) by unknown assailants.

Extremist Group Claims Credit

3. (C) As in the January 14 attack, a self-described representative of the banned religious extremist organization, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, called the Quetta Press Club to claim responsibility. (Note: Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, designated a terrorist organization by both the USG and the GOP, has been linked to a number of terrorist attacks in Pakistan, including the 1997 killing of four American oil workers in Karachi, the 2002 murder of Daniel Pearl, the 2002 killing of 11 French workers, and the 2002 International Church bombing in Islamabad. End comment.)

Riots, Protests Follow Assassination

4. (C) Ejaz Ahmed, a Quetta journalist, told Post that

hundreds of protestors took to the streets of downtown Quetta after the killing, effectively shutting down businesses there. They burned a bank building and several automobiles and motorcycles before police firing teargas dispersed the mob. Frontier Corps troops later took charge of security in the city, which was relatively calm on January 27. However, many shops in the Hazara section remained shuttered to protest the killing.

Accusations Fly

15. (C) HDP General Secretary Abdul Khaliq blamed the GOP for failing to provide adequate security. He emphasized that HDP Chair Hussain had been killed by religious extremists and accused security officials of supporting the attack. Balochistan National Party (BNP) Secretary General Habib Jalib went further and claimed the GOP had abetted the extremists in an attempt to destabilize the provincial government with an end goal of promoting Taliban rule and undermining the Baloch nationalist movement. (Comment: Baloch political leaders routinely accuse GOP officials of conspiring with religious extremists, often without evidence. End comment.)

16. (C) Quetta Superintendent of Police Naseebullah Kakar countered that police officials have also been targeted by the extremists. He noted that sectarian violence had increased since the escape from the Quetta Anti-Terrorist Force jail by two prominent Lashkar-e-Jhangvi leaders, Usman Saifullah and Shafiqur Rehman, in January 2008.

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17. (C) Razq Wajeek, General Secretary of Balochistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran (a Hazara business association), told Post that terrorist leader Saifullah routinely sends signed threats to targeted Hazaras. Wajeek said killings of Hazaras over the past year, 25 by his estimate, have escalated since the end of Ramadan.

Comment

18. (C) The Hazaras have roots in Afghanistan and make up around 170,000 of Balochistan's estimated 6.7 million inhabitants. They have established a reputation as a relatively educated and affluent minority in Quetta. Their distinctive features differentiate them from the local population making them easy targets.

19. (C) This marks the third prominent killing of Hazaras in January (reftel). Sunni militants, who regard the Shi'a as heretics, have clashed violently with them in the past. The recent killings could be indicative of an increase in Sunni militant activity in Balochistan (Shi'as are often the first group targeted by Sunni extremists) aimed at fomenting sectarian strife, or they could have a totally unrelated origin. As in the case of the attack against Hazara police officers described in reftel, this assassination was a particularly bold and appears to be a direct challenge to civil authority in the province's capital city. If sectarian violence continues to escalate, it could morph into violent conflict between the two religious sects.

FAKAN